

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Close Presidential Race Puts Focus on U.S. Electoral System

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 25 October 2012

Washington — U.S. political polling on how Americans are likely to vote November 6, particularly in hotly contested [swing states](#), has generated many predictions that the contest between President Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney is going to be very close.

Because U.S. presidents actually are chosen by 538 electors rather than directly by the voters, is it possible that neither Romney nor Obama will receive the 270 electoral votes needed to win? Or could one win the most votes overall but lose the electoral vote? Could they even tie, with 269 electoral votes apiece?

Technically, all of these scenarios are possible, and some have even happened before in U.S. history because of the [Electoral College](#) system.

In the 2000 election between President George W. Bush and former Vice President Al Gore, Gore lost the election despite winning the popular vote. Both candidates needed Florida's 25 electoral votes to win, and the state's election results showed Bush's margin of victory over Gore so slim that mandatory vote recounts were necessary. The U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 to end the recounts, which allowed Florida to certify its results in favor of Bush.

Thomas Neale, a U.S. government specialist at the Congressional Research Service, says if he had been asked in late 2000 if the U.S. Congress would propose a constitutional amendment either to reform or replace the Electoral College, he would have said yes at the time because of the controversy over the election results.

But the Congress didn't do so, he told an audience at Washington's Foreign Press Center on October 24, explaining the difficulty and hard work involved in passing amendments.

Congress instead focused on the difficulties encountered during the Florida recount and implemented new technological standards for voting, including electronic voting hardware. Congress also authorized grants to help U.S. states "modernize their voting systems so that we could move forward in that area and make the recording of votes more complete and accurate and timely," Neale said.

The U.S. Constitution is [the world's oldest that is still in use](#), and the Electoral College system reflects the 18th-century American mindset, which restricted democratic

participation to white men who owned a certain amount of property. "It was such an unusual idea in 1787 to have direct election," Neale explained.

America's founders also favored the system because they wanted the elections to be decided by individual states, rather than the federal legislature. "They did not want the president to be answerable to Congress for his election or re-election. They wanted the president to be more independent," he said.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE ANIMATES 2012 PREDICTIONS

According to New York Times pollster Nate Silver's predictions for the 2012 election, as of October 25 the chance that Mitt Romney will suffer Al Gore's fate and win the popular vote but lose the electoral college is 5.6 percent, compared with a 1.8 percent chance for Obama.

Silver's analysis also says there is a 10 percent likelihood that the result from a decisive swing state will be within the margin of error (0.5 percent) and require the state's election officials to recount the ballots.

But his latest data show there is only a 0.5 percent chance that Obama and Romney will obtain a 269 electoral vote tie. In that scenario, the U.S. House of Representatives would decide the outcome, with each state's delegation being allowed one vote.

The House has determined the election winner only twice in U.S. history. In 1800, the House was called to break an electoral college tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. In 1824, no candidate received an electoral college majority and the U.S. legislators ultimately picked John Quincy Adams as president.

Just as the House of Representatives needs to determine a U.S. president in cases where neither candidate wins a majority or the electoral vote is tied, the U.S. Senate would pick the winner of the vice presidency under U.S. constitutional law.

Most pollsters assume that after the coming elections, the Republican Party will retain control of the House of Representatives and the Democratic Party will hold on to the Senate.

In a Romney-Obama electoral vote tie, it is therefore likely that the House of Representatives would choose Romney as president. However, it is just as likely that the Democratic-controlled Senate would choose Joe Biden as vice president over Romney's running mate, Paul Ryan.

In his remarks, Neale acknowledged that the U.S. Electoral College system is "not perfect." Still, there have

been 51 U.S. presidential elections, and in 47 of those the winner of the electoral votes also won the popular vote, which is "a pretty good record," he said.

In all likelihood, the 2012 election "should make it 48 of 52 if everything works out, which is not bad in the greater scheme of things," Neale said.

MAMA Health Information Program Wins Innovation Award

25 October 2012

Washington — The Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA) recently won recognition for its unique focus on improving the lives of millions of new and expectant mothers in developing countries, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

MAMA, a public-private partnership to help provide health information to new and expectant mothers through mobile phones, won the 2012 Fast Company Innovation by Design Award in the "Service Design" category, USAID said in an October 22 press release.

The program has launched mobile phone services in Bangladesh and South Africa and has shared its adaptable health messages with more than 70 organizations that aim to reach more than 20 million expectant and new mothers in 35 countries from Afghanistan to Zambia, according to USAID.

MAMA subscribers register for the service by indicating their expected due date or the birthday of their recently born child, and receive weekly health messages and reminders during the pregnancy and up to the infant's first birthday. By registering, subscribers receive timed messages that include important information on proper nutrition, newborn care, breast-feeding, immunizations and connections to local health resources.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton launched MAMA on Mother's Day in 2011. The founding partners include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Johnson & Johnson, the mHealth Alliance, the United Nations Foundation and BabyCenter.

Winners were chosen from more than 1,700 nominated organizations, including Nike, Boeing, Ford, Leap Motion and other industry leaders.

The Innovation by Design Competition awards "the year's most inspiring, ingenious, and innovative design solutions." Submissions for the award were vetted by 27 independent and prominent judges, from Museum of Modern Art Senior Curator Paola Antonelli to Coca-Cola Vice President of Innovation David Butler.

United States Celebrates United Nations Day

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 24 October 2012

Washington — The United States is celebrating 67 years of global accomplishments through the United Nations as the organization marks its anniversary October 24, according to U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice.

"As the principal forum for international cooperation, the United Nations has averted wars, saved lives, fought disease and poverty and protected human rights for almost seven decades," Rice said in a statement on the anniversary, often called United Nations Day.

She said the United States remains "firmly committed to preserving and strengthening this important institution," adding that the organization ensures "the world is better equipped to handle the challenges of the 21st century."

Rice said the United States has played a leading role in the United Nations from its start. Former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who coined the name "United Nations," was a leader in the organization's creation. Even before World War II officially ended, Roosevelt met with his counterparts from around the world to develop the charter for the United Nations — an organization built to promote global peace, development and human rights. The United Nations charter officially entered into force October 24, 1945, and was supported by 51 nations.

The organization now has grown to include 193 members that represent every region in the world. Each nation brings to the table a unique social, political and economic system; all are bound by a common commitment to the United Nations mission.

"Together, we've made important progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons; we've supported critical United Nations peacekeeping and political activities to end conflicts, protect civilians and support democratic transitions worldwide; [and] we've launched massive relief efforts to help the vulnerable and those suffering from man-made and natural disasters," Rice said in remarks before the anniversary.

She said the United States has continued to work as a leader within the United Nations, taking a leading role in efforts to protect human rights.

"We've reinvigorated the U.N.'s human rights machinery and adopted landmark resolutions to condemn violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals," Rice said, adding that the organization also has recently added a new agency to help empower women.

The group continues to promote child survival, maternal health, sustainable energy and development while it works to tackle a number of emerging global challenges.

Since its inception, the United Nations has helped negotiate more than 170 peace settlements that have ended regional conflicts, and have participated in more than 300 international treaties on topics ranging from environmental protection to human rights. It has provided a catalyst for conflict prevention and a forum for mediation. U.N. military forces have carried out more than 35 peacekeeping missions to provide security and reduce armed conflict.

The organization has made great strides in protecting human rights, promoting humanitarian assistance and supporting improvements in the lives of people around the globe. It has aided more than 30 million refugees fleeing war, persecution or famine; proactively worked to end diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria through the World Health Organization; provided training and equipment to developing countries; promoted workers' rights; worked to achieve nuclear nonproliferation; and streamlined international cooperation on monetary issues.

In each of these efforts, Rice said, the United States has played a pivotal role. Most recently, she said, the United States has advanced the U.N. mission by championing a more modern and efficient structure while helping the organization to achieve its first meaningful budget cut in more than a decade.

"We've worked to promote a stronger and more effective United Nations that is better equipped to tackle the global challenges of tomorrow," Rice said.

She said the United States remains committed to the United Nations as the principal forum for international cooperation in the 21st century.

The anniversary fell shortly after Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, Korea and Rwanda were elected to serve as nonpermanent members of the U.N. Security Council for 2013 and 2014.

"We look forward to a strong and productive partnership with these incoming members to address issues fundamental to international peace and security," Rice said in an October 18 statement.

The U.N. General Assembly meets intensively from September to December each year at U.N. headquarters in New York. The 2012 meeting marked global progress in a number of areas, ranging from agriculture and education to peace and security.

MCC Paves Philippine Highway to Opportunity

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 24 October 2012

Washington — A restored 222-kilometer road connecting the east and west sides of Samar in central Philippines will improve the island's commercial activity, help residents reach health centers and save transportation time and costs, says the U.S. agency funding the project.

"By rehabilitating this road we are doing more than just paving it, we are creating a highway to opportunity," U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Chief Executive Officer Daniel Yohannes said at the kick-off for construction in October.

Improving the Samar road is one of three projects being funded by MCC under a five-year, \$434 million agreement that began in May 2011. The road — accounting for \$214.4 million of the MCC support — passes through 15 municipalities along mountains to the eastern shoreline.

The agreement also provides \$54.3 million to computerize and streamline processes within the Philippines' Bureau of Internal Revenue so it can increase tax revenues and reduce tax evasion. MCC partnered with the International Monetary Fund to reform the country's tax administration, allowing the government to invest more in strengthening the country's infrastructure.

"This will help make the Philippines more competitive in the region and better able to attract foreign investment," Johannes told members of the Makati Business Club and Management Association of the Philippines in October. Makati, a part of metropolitan Manila, is the country's financial hub.

Johannes said that the Philippines' current leaders are "putting the country firmly on the path to growth." He noted the economy is forecast to grow 6 percent, its budget deficit has shrunk 37 percent from last year, and the country's competitive ranking has jumped 20 places.

"We see a commitment to a stable and level playing field where outcomes are predictable and good governance is the norm," Johannes said.

The agreement provides another \$120 million to support the building of essential infrastructure — water systems, clinics and schools — in rural areas where poverty exceeds the national average. The project also aims to improve the responsiveness of local governments to community needs, a goal that is already achieving results.

On October 17, local leaders and residents joined Yohannes in La Paz, on the central Philippine island of Leyte, to celebrate the opening of a new elementary

school, a water supply system and a farm-to-market road. "More important than the physical infrastructure is the human capacity developed and a sense of what the Filipinos call bayanihan, or communal unity and spirit," Yohannes said.

"The people's presence [at the opening] underscores that this is a project they stand behind as they welcome the benefits their communities will enjoy from it," he said.

MCC awards grants to countries that have good track records in ruling justly, investing in people and encouraging economic freedom. Before a country can become eligible for MCC assistance, the agency's board of directors examines its performance based on 20 policy indicators including land, gender equality in education, health and the economy, and regulatory and trade policy.

Residents of MCC recipient counties develop their priorities for achieving sustainable economic growth.

More information about MCC is available on its website.

Young Chinese Scientists Collaborate with U.S. Counterparts

24 October 2012

Washington — Young science professionals from 10 Chinese research and policy institutions met with 10 young American scientists at the Department of State in Washington October 18 for the third U.S.-China Young Scientist Forum (YSF). The first two YSFs were held in Beijing in 2011 and 2012.

The YSF is an outcome of the science and technology working group of the U.S.-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE). The CPE, launched by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chinese State Councilor Liu Yandong in Beijing in 2010, aims to enhance people-to-people exchanges between the citizens of the United States and China in education, culture, sports, women's issues, and science and technology.

The third YSF was led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of Science, Space and Health Jonathan Margolis and Wang Qiang, international cooperation division director of American and oceanic affairs for China's Ministry of Science and Technology.

Twenty U.S. and Chinese young science professionals exchanged views on challenges and opportunities for young scientists such as how to build international networks and research collaborations, manage work-life balance issues and obtaining scientific mentoring.

Following this event, the 10 Chinese science professionals will meet with additional counterparts at Arizona State

University and in California's Silicon Valley through the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, administered through the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Collaboration in science and technology is an important and dynamic area of the U.S.-China bilateral relationship, dating back to the 1979 U.S.-China Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement, which was one of the first bilateral agreements between the United States and China.

As the landscape of science continues to become more global, the CPE science and technology working group helps young scientists in both countries to develop skills for successful international collaboration to productively engage with colleagues around the world for solving the world's most pressing problems, the State Department said.

Final Presidential Debate Keeps Some Focus on U.S. Economy

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 23 October 2012

Washington — In their last debate before the November 6 election, President Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney agreed on the goal of transferring full security responsibility in Afghanistan to Afghan forces by 2014 and on continuing international sanctions against Iran in response to its nuclear activities.

But both presidential candidates also managed to shift their conversation away from the October 22 debate's announced foreign policy topics to discuss the main issue on the minds of most American voters: the U.S. economy.

In his remarks at the Lynn University event in Boca Raton, Florida, Romney said the U.S. national debt is the country's "biggest national security threat," adding that American strength and global leadership require U.S. leaders to "strengthen our economy here at home" to provide jobs and boost economic growth.

President Obama said that after a decade of war, with U.S. troops ending their presence in Iraq and preparing to leave Afghanistan, "it's time to do some nation-building here at home" by putting Americans back to work rebuilding U.S. infrastructure and schools, and by investing in education, research and technology.

The debate was moderated by CBS' Bob Schieffer, who said in an October 23 interview with CBS that he had been surprised that both candidates wanted to talk about U.S. economic issues instead of the planned focus on foreign policy. But he said that "this is their campaign," and that the debate had been successful in giving viewers a better understanding of the two candidates.

When asked about allowing Obama and Romney to have a long discussion on the U.S. educational system, including teachers' unions and class sizes, Schieffer said that "education is the basis for our national security."

Opening the debate, Schieffer noted that it had been exactly 50 years before — October 22, 1963 — when President John F. Kennedy disclosed to the world that the Soviet Union had installed nuclear missiles in Cuba. The 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis was "perhaps the closest we've ever come to nuclear war," Schieffer said, and is "a sobering reminder that every president faces at some point an unexpected threat to our national security from abroad."

Asked about the political upheaval in Syria, Obama described the situation as "heartbreaking," and Romney said it was "a humanitarian disaster." Both supported helping the Syrian opposition while taking care not to arm elements in Syria that could later use the arms against the United States or U.S. allies in the region.

The two presidential candidates also expressed their support for Egypt's 2011 revolution, which overthrew longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak.

Those calling for freedom in Egypt "were speaking of our principles," Romney said. Mubarak "had done things which were unimaginable, and the idea of him crushing his people was not something that we could possibly support."

"America has to stand with democracy," Obama said, and will support the revolution by helping Egyptians develop their economy and provide more opportunity for the young.

"Their aspirations are similar to young people's here. They want jobs. They want to be able to make sure their kids are going to a good school. They want to make sure that they have a roof over their heads and that they have the prospects of a better life in the future," he said.

Romney said Americans want to promote "a peaceful planet," where people can "enjoy their lives and know they're going to have a bright and prosperous future and not be at war."

George McGovern, Champion in Fight Against Hunger, Dead at 90

22 October 2012

Washington — The world lost a leader in the war against hunger when George McGovern, a former U.S. senator and presidential candidate, died October 21 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He was 90 years old.

Most Americans probably remember McGovern best for his 1972 challenge to President Richard Nixon, but the world will remember him for his tireless work to improve food security around the globe.

In 2002, McGovern, a Democrat, and his former Senate colleague Bob Dole, a Republican, co-founded what became the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, a global school feeding effort that promotes education, child development and food security for poor children to provide them with meals at schools in countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Since it began, the program has provided meals to 22 million children in 41 countries.

For their leadership in passing legislation to establish the McGovern-Dole program, in 2008 the two former senators received the World Food Prize, which is awarded to individuals whose efforts have made significant contributions to improving the quality, quantity and availability of food in the world.

"His legacy will be that he took food to people around the world, making it available, and it's this wonderful, wonderful achievement," said Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation.

"Today we have lost a tireless advocate for the world's hungry," said José Graziano da Silva, director-general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

"His work drafting legislation in his own country to meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable women, infants and children and as a vigorous champion of school lunch programmes, both in the U.S. and around the world, has helped give millions of the world's poorest children the nutritional foundation needed to succeed in school and life," Graziano da Silva said.

AN UNLIKELY POLITICIAN

Born in Avon, South Dakota, in 1922, McGovern won a scholarship to attend Dakota Wesleyan University in South Dakota, but World War II interrupted his studies. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942 and served as a bomber pilot in Europe, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war, McGovern returned to Dakota Wesleyan University, graduating in 1946. He then attended Garrett Seminary for one year before enrolling at Northwestern University in Chicago, where he earned a master's degree and a doctorate in American history and government. He returned to Dakota Wesleyan in 1950 to teach history and political science.

That quiet academic life began to recede in favor of a political career in 1952, when McGovern heard a speech by Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson and was inspired to join Stevenson's campaign in South Dakota. McGovern's involvement in that race built the foundation for his own run for office.

"When the people of South Dakota sent him to Washington, this hero of war became a champion for peace," President Obama said, referring to both his distinguished service in World War II and his outspoken criticism of U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. "George was a statesman of great conscience and conviction."

In 1956, McGovern was elected to the first of two terms in the House of Representatives. Seeking election to the Senate in 1960, he failed but was appointed by President John Kennedy as the first director of the U.S. Food for Peace Program. In that post, McGovern oversaw the donation of millions of tons of food to developing nations. The idea, pioneered by the United States, was the genesis of the U.N. World Food Programme.

McGovern ran again for the Senate in 1962, this time successfully. Serving on committees responsible for agriculture, nutrition, forestry and foreign relations, he led the way in expanding nutrition programs.

In 1972, McGovern won the Democratic nomination for president and, running on an anti-war platform, lost to President Richard Nixon. Nixon's successor, President Gerald Ford, named McGovern a delegate to the U.N. General Assembly in 1976; in 1978, President Jimmy Carter named him a delegate for the U.N. Special Session on Disarmament.

When McGovern retired from the Senate in 1980 after 22 years of service, he became a visiting professor at numerous institutions, including Columbia University, Northwestern University, Cornell University, American University and the University of Berlin.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton appointed McGovern ambassador to the United Nations' food and agriculture agencies in Rome. In 2000, Clinton awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor. The following year, McGovern was appointed the first U.N. global ambassador on hunger.

"George believed deeply in public service. It defined him as a Senator and as a man," Vice President Biden said. "He never stopped serving for his entire life — whether it was his courage in World War II, his time in Congress, or his fight to eliminate hunger at home and abroad."

"There can be no doubt that throughout his half-century

career in the public arena, George McGovern never gave up on his principles," Dole wrote in a letter published October 22 in the Washington Post. "America and the world are for the better because of him."

Funeral services will be held October 26 in Sioux Falls. A private burial will take place at a later date in Washington.

World Food Prize Laureate Urges Sustainable Food Production

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 22 October 2012

Washington — Ensuring efficient and sustainable management of land, water and biotic resources to produce more food while protecting the environment is a challenge to the current generation and to future generations, says 2012 World Food Prize laureate Daniel Hillel.

"To meet this challenge we must overcome sectarian barriers to promote international and interdisciplinary communication and cooperation," Hillel said at an October 18 ceremony in Des Moines, Iowa, at which he received the award for his pioneering work with micro-irrigation. His work revolutionized food production in some of the driest areas of the world in a way that saved water, increased crop yields and minimized environmental degradation, according to the foundation that awards the World Food Prize.

The ceremony was part of the Borlaug Symposium, an international forum of public and private leaders in agriculture, environmental science, health and education. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced Hillel's selection for the award at a June ceremony at the State Department.

"Today, farmers using micro-irrigation produce high-yield, nutritious crops on more than 6 million hectares worldwide. Dr. Hillel's work will become even more important as we grapple with how to feed the world's growing population," Clinton said at the June ceremony.

Hillel was born in Los Angeles in 1930 and was 1 year old when his family moved to Palestine. At an early age, he was sent to a kibbutz, where he learned to respect land.

He returned to the United States and earned a master's degree at Rutgers University before age 20. He moved to the new state of Israel in 1951 and became involved in drawing up the first map of the country's land and water resources for its Ministry of Agriculture.

With a small group of pioneers, Hillel moved to the Negev Highland, an area that had not been agriculturally productive for centuries. There he studied water and soil

and gradually learned to understand the dry climate.

A chance meeting with David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, led to Ben-Gurion's sending Hillel to help establish agriculture programs in Burma as part of Israel's earliest development assistance programs.

Returning to Israel, he earned a doctoral degree in soil physics and ecology at the Hebrew University and became an expert in soil, water and irrigation in a way that would transform how water is delivered to crops.

BETTER PREPARED

Addressing the award ceremony, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the world draws hope from contributions from people like Hillel. "Imagine trying to coax crops out of the dry ground of the Middle East. Imagine knowing that the only sources of water are a seasonal trickle or an occasional downpour," he said.

Hillel's irrigation system, he noted, made the Negev desert a source of sustenance for Israel.

While the challenge of feeding a growing world population with limited land and water is great, "there are hopeful signs of progress we can build upon," Hillel said.

U.S. Works with Central Asia on Wide Range of Issues

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 19 October 2012

Washington — The United States is engaging the nations of Central Asia on a broad and deep range of issues with the goal of helping them to build a prosperous region that offers increased stability and a greater voice for civil society.

Speaking to Indiana University's Inner Asia and Uralic National Resource Center October 18, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O. Blake said he believes that U.S. engagement with Central Asia will not lead to another round of the "Great Game," where external powers try to dominate a region. Instead, he said, the region can look forward to what he called a "Great Gain," in which the United States and its Central Asian partners, plus Russia, China and other international entities, work together toward greater economic opportunities.

Blake said after Afghanistan assumes full responsibility for its security in 2014, the United States will remain committed to the success of the country's security transition and to regional security, as Afghanistan moves from an economy based on aid to one based on trade.

"The best way to achieve that is to integrate Afghanistan

into the region," Blake said. "The more Afghanistan is integrated economically into its regional neighborhood, the more it will be able to attract private investment, benefit from its vast mineral resources, and provide economic opportunity for its citizens."

In essence, the United States envisions the creation of a "New Silk Road" that integrates the economies of Central and South Asia, with Afghanistan at its center, Blake said. The assistant secretary cited examples of concrete steps that Central Asian nations are taking to make this vision a reality:

- Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are implementing electricity projects that supply power to meet the rising demand in Afghanistan and could later supply power to Pakistan.
- Uzbekistan has constructed a rail line to Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan and is considering extending the line to Herat in western Afghanistan. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan are building another rail line that will provide a new trade route and outlet for Afghan goods through the Caspian.
- Plans to construct a gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India are progressing, as evidenced by their discussions to form a consortium to implement the project.

Blake said while the Central Asian countries recognize the necessity and benefits of greater regional economic coordination, there remains much to do to seize those opportunities. He said the Central Asian nations will need to ensure rule of law, reduce corruption and other border crossing impediments, protect copyrights and other forms of intellectual property, eliminate onerous and contradictory foreign investment rules and reform the opaque and unpredictable regulatory environments.

As the United States continues to engage with the region, it is expanding dialogues on human rights, civil society and democracy. Blake said in the preceding 12 months, the United States provided \$26.6 million in support of democratic reforms, human rights, rule of law, access to information and invigorating civil society.

"We have seen some progress, but far more needs to be done," he said.

He said the United States is working to increase people-to-people contacts with Central Asia.

"To take one example, over 40,000 Americans and Kazakhstanis have participated in State Department-sponsored bilateral exchanges in the last 20 years. In 2011 alone, about 50 American colleges and universities hosted

3,188 students from throughout Central Asia, including 1,890 from Kazakhstan and 560 from Uzbekistan," he said.

U.S. Food Program Marks Progress Helping Farmers, Children

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 19 October 2012

Washington — The United States' global food security program Feed the Future has helped 1.8 million food producers adopt improved technologies or management practices that can lead to more resilient crops, higher yields and increased incomes, according to the program's first progress report.

Led by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Feed the Future brings together the private sector, nonprofit groups, women's cooperatives and local communities to support new approaches to advance global food security. Feed the Future aims to reduce poverty by 20 percent and stunted children under 5 years old by 20 percent in its 20 focus countries.

"We have built some remarkable momentum since President Obama helped rally the world behind the need to dramatically reinvest in agriculture at the 2009 G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy," said Rajiv Shah, USAID administrator. Shah released the report October 18 during World Food Prize events in Des Moines, Iowa. The report notes that Feed the Future has also reached nearly 9 million children through programs to prevent and treat malnutrition and improve child survival.

Shah highlighted several Feed the Future efforts.

He said Feed the Future will continue to support Solutions for African Food Enterprises, an alliance with the nonprofit Partners in Food Solutions that links the technical and business expertise of volunteer employees at companies General Mills, Cargill and DSM with small- and medium-sized food processors in developing countries.

Shah said USAID's Development Credit Authority will partially back private loans made to small-holder farmer organizations, including those that contract with the World Food Programme's Purchase for Progress initiative. That means those groups can use their contracts to obtain local, private financing.

Shah also said that:

- USAID will support Root Capital, a nonprofit social investment fund, in its loans to small agricultural businesses in Africa. The support will allow the fund to provide more than \$50 million in loans over five years to more than 1 million small-scale farmers to help them

improve yields, reduce post-harvest losses and process nutritious foods.

- Feed the Future's agricultural training and education program will strengthen the capacity of universities, and technical, vocational, secondary and primary schools, that focus on educating the next generation of agricultural professionals. It will also facilitate long-term collaboration between U.S. universities and developing country institutions, and support new public-private partnerships to advance climate-resistant cereals in Africa and South Asia.

- Feed the Future will continue to partner with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development fellowship program that so far has provided training to more than 250 women scientists from 11 African countries.

Feed the Future also involves the departments of State, Agriculture, Treasury and Commerce, the Peace Corps, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. African Development Foundation.

U.S. Sanctions Business Associate of Muammar Qadhafi's Son

19 October 2012

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury October 18 placed Dalene Sanders under sanctions for providing support and services to Saadi Qadhafi, son of former Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

The action generally prohibits U.S. persons from engaging in transactions with Sanders, a South African citizen, and freezes any assets she may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

"Today's designation of a key, ongoing supporter of Saadi Qadhafi reflects the United States government's steadfast commitment to a free and democratic Libya," said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen, in a Treasury Department news release. "We are determined to oppose all those who seek to foster violence, fear or instability in Libya, and we will continue to support efforts to prevent funds belonging to the Libyan people from being misused."

Saadi Qadhafi, currently believed to be in Niger, was placed under U.S. sanctions by Executive Order (E.O.) 13566 on March 11, 2011. The United Nations also imposed sanctions on Saadi Qadhafi on March 17, 2011, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973. Dalene Sanders is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13566 because she has provided financial and material support to, as well as services in support of, Saadi Qadhafi. She is also being

designated for acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of Saadi Qadhafi.

Saadi Qadhafi has called for an uprising against the democratically elected Libyan government and has threatened to return to Libya to carry on his father's brutal legacy. He also has claimed to be in contact with a number of people who are willing to help him with his revolt. Saadi Qadhafi's ongoing activities and the potential misuse of resources at his disposal pose a direct threat to Libya's democratic transition, according to the Treasury Department.

Dalene Sanders has been working to move money out of bank accounts held in Uganda, on instruction from Saadi Qadhafi, the department said. In February 2012, Sanders also met with Ugandan officials to discuss asylum in Uganda for Saadi Qadhafi.

On March 1, 2011, President Obama declared a national emergency with respect to Libya in E.O. 13566. This authority named Muammar Qadhafi (who was killed in October 2011), his government, his family and his close associates for being involved in the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression in Libya.

The U.S. government continues to work to support Libya's security and democratic transition, the Treasury Department said. In this regard, the naming of Saadi Qadhafi's associate seeks to prevent Libyan state assets from being misappropriated by Qadhafi's family members or close associates to threaten the democratically elected government.

Palestinian "Diamonds" Shine with Entrepreneurship, Innovation

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DipNote
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Palestinian "Diamonds" of Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Posted by Joshua Walker

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The image of the Palestinian Territories, for most outsiders who have never had the chance to visit the ruggedly beautiful terrain, typically only involves the

political stalemate that overshadows the incredible creativity and inventiveness of the Palestinian people. In many ways Palestinians seem to have entrepreneurship in their DNA. I had the opportunity to witness this first hand on a recent visit to the region, where I accompanied [U.S. Special Representative for Global Partnerships](#) Kris Balderston. He was leading a delegation of American entrepreneurs and investors seeking to harness this entrepreneurial spirit and celebrate the culture of innovation in the West Bank.

Palestine for a New Beginning, the Palestinian chapter of the State Department-private sector [Partners for a New Beginning](#) (PNB), hosted its second annual Celebration of Innovation (COI) on October 7 in Ramallah. This event brought together 15 teams of young entrepreneurs to present their business plans to a panel of private-sector judges. After listening to seven-minute pitches, the judges selected five winning teams. The Palestinian executives who make up the board of PNB have committed to providing the winners with additional training, mentorship, and funding to help them successfully start and grow their fledgling companies. A significant portion of the Palestinian business community, as well as the [U.S. Consul General to Jerusalem](#), the Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister of Telcom and IT, and the PA Minister of National Economy, attended the event, portions of which were covered live by Palestine TV.

Brought together by the Aspen Institute (serving as PNB Secretariat), the U.S. delegation spent five days learning from the local chapter about the business, education, and investment climate in the West Bank. The PNB Palestine chapter was among the original six members of the PNB partnership and has been leading the way toward seeing opportunities in the midst of a challenging environment since its creation in 2010.

As PNB Palestine chair Zahi Khouri described to the group, "Diamonds are created under pressure, therefore it is only natural that Palestinians entrepreneurs are like diamonds within this region." The Celebration of Innovation brought together 28 young, aspiring Palestinian entrepreneurs from hundreds of applicants. The Palestinian PNB leadership sought to promote the best and brightest entrepreneurs to bring international attention to the business opportunities in the West Bank.

Over the course of our visit, the delegation mentored the young Palestinian competitors and visited entrepreneurs and incubators in Bethlehem, Nabulus, Jerusalem, and Ramallah. The delegation also participated in roundtables on education and universities within the West Bank, met with small businesswomen owners supported by Tomorrow's Youth Organization, and were briefed on the economic situation by Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad. The visit culminated in a celebration announcing the five

winners of the COI competition on October 7.

The five winning teams included a Gaza-based business that designs furniture for use in small spaces; a software company, also based in Gaza, that designs web and mobile Arabic educational games for children; a third Gaza-based company that uses technology to improve hydroponics, water usage, and grey water recycling; a female-owned sheep farm based in Nablus that is beginning to expand into the organic market; and a wind-power company planning on developing the first wind farm in the West Bank. While presenting their business plans, participants explained how they intended to overcome obstacles inherent to doing business in the West Bank and Gaza, such as the difficulties in securing permits from the Israeli government to build infrastructure, such as wind turbines, or the challenges in importing needed equipment into Gaza. The Palestinian organizers and large audience enthusiastically welcomed the Gazan participants in the program. (Of the 12 entrepreneurs from Gaza, only one had ever been outside the Gaza Strip before.)

With a commitment for seed-funding and mentorship by the PNB local chapter, each of these unique Palestinian diamonds were beaming and shining bright, proving that even in difficult climates such as the Palestinian Territories, where there is a will there is a way. Congratulations to each of the winners and all of the participants in the Celebration of Innovation. The Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships is excited to see how each of these young Palestinian diamonds progress and is proud to be a part of PNB Palestine's success.

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